

# The Bliss of Self Realisation

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

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Good evening Sundari

I met you in Berkeley. It was so good and I love everything James is saying on the YouTube videos. I am following his 16 parts videos from Germany last year.

Sundari: Hello Pamela, lovely to hear from you, so glad you wrote to us.

Pamela: Yesterday , while listening to James talking I had this experience of understanding that I, the Self am everything, the other human, the animal, the tree, the water , the soil, the air and from that vintage point I am everywhere and I am everything. With that understanding I was laughing and crying, because it was a such a relief, complete relief from old way of “seeing” or seeing as a Jiva.

Sundari: This is a common experience when the mind discovers its true nature. This is called self realization and it is experiential; it is very blissful but unfortunately it will not last unless the mind is directed and prepared to receive the knowledge the experience is meant to impart. And, very importantly, understands what self knowledge means, without interpretation by the mind's conditioning.

Also, don't confuse peace of mind with always feeling blissful. This is a big enlightenment myth. What *moksa* gives you is the bliss of self knowledge, which is very different from experiential bliss. When moksa has obtained in the mind one may and usually *does* feel experiential bliss regularly, but one does not depend on it because you know *you* are the bliss. Experiential bliss is an object known to you and you are always blissful, whether or not experiential bliss is present. In fact, you could be sick, in pain and half dead, broke, jobless or stuck in a situation you do not enjoy but cannot change...and be totally blissful because who you are is not influenced by what is or is not going on around you. You feel blissful regardless of what is going on in the mind.

Pamela: From this point of understanding I thought, there is no difference what I eat (vegetarianism versus meat eating) , as I am everything, I am that meat which I eat, it is me I see in others, animals, trees. Does not matter if I kill or am killed (Jiva`s body), it is I, the Self again., who doesn't care how she sheds its body.

Sundari: Correct. To the self there is no life or death because all objects are only apparently real. Don't project human feelings onto the self; the self does not care or not care. It is that which knows the one who cares or does not care. It is that in which all objects arise and dissolve, but it is never invested in objects. Remember, the subject can never become the object. Feelings are just objects known to you, awareness.

Pamela: Sundari my question to you is:

1. is my thinking about all of this correct

Sundari: See above.

Pamela: 2. how to remember that , or is it "living as Jiva and being pulled into the Life" has to be, so then you keep this new understanding in the background, as you proceed with your daily tasks. I found myself or self forgetting this today .Do I need to practice "knowing this", like bring into the focus constantly??

Sundari: Self realisation is where all the "work" of self inquiry begins.It is all very well knowing you are the self, but if this knowledge does not translate into the life of the jiva, what good does it do?The work involves understanding what the jiva is, how its conditioning came to be, what the conditioning is governed by (the *gunas*) and the *jiva's* relationship to its environment, i.e. *Isvara* or God. Self inquiry needs to reveal to you the identity between the *jiva* and *Isvara*.If the *jiva* is not understood in the light of self knowledge, freedom from and for the *jiva* is not possible.

Vedanta is not interested in awakening experiences. Although James had many, his guru right at the beginning of his discipleship made it very clear that he was not interested in what he was experiencing or had experienced. And **if you study the texts there is not one experiential qualification listed for liberation.** This is so because the Self is always present and all you need is a means to reveal it. When it is revealed in the context of the teaching it is easy to understand what it means and what it doesn't mean in terms of your life here in *samsara*. When you are on your own or in the presence of a teacher who is not qualified to teach, you can easily draw conclusions that are not warranted.

Awakening can happen at any place, at any time and in any set of circumstances. Nobody knows why it happens except to say that it is a blessing...or a curse if you don't know what to make of it because the mind is not qualified to assimilate the true meaning. Awakening is not liberation because liberation is Self knowledge and the Self never slept. Liberation is liberation from the one who awakened, assuming that person was actually asleep. In fact, waking and sleep are just metaphors to describe knowledge and ignorance. Probably 99% of those claiming to be awakened and/or liberated do not understand this point. They maintain the limited perspective and claim that they got an experiential something extra....**Liberation!**

But the Self is always free. It has always been free. So there is no gain. There is a loss...of self ignorance...but that is all. You are not wonderful because you got what you always had. Vedanta is not a path. Vedanta is a *pramana*. **Pramana is a means of Self knowledge.** A path requires effort. You have to walk. **To walk you need to be a doer, a walker.** Vedanta sits above all the paths. It is the knowledge that sets you free irrespective of the way you come to it. Anyone who has this knowledge, gained with or without a teacher, assuming that it cancels his or her sense of doership and neutralizes the binding *vasanas*, is a Vedantin whether or not he or she has ever heard of *Vedanta pramana* and the *Vedanta Sampradaya*, the lineage. Knowledge is knowledge. It has nothing to do with people and their experiences.

So if you are seeking liberation, you will stop seeking when you understand why and how the seeker is already free. In other words, you will understand that you have an ignorance problem. **If you have an ignorance problem, no path is going to work. Only knowledge will work.** There

is one Self. There is one problem...ignorance. And there is one solution...Self knowledge. These statements may seem to be dogmatic but they are just statements of fact. If you are situated in duality and think there are many doers and many paths and many truths, you will not like this statement and you will say that I am dogmatic, but this is the truth—not MY truth, whether you like it or not. To help you along, this is what self inquiry consists of:

## 8 Stages to Self-inquiry:

**1. Sravana:** Listening or hearing the scripture. This requires that you leave everything you previously believed or thought you knew, temporarily on the shelf. You can take your beliefs back if self-knowledge does not work for you. But for now leave them on the shelf. This is very important; if you keep comparing Vedanta to all your beliefs and opinions and try to make it comply with them, forget about self-inquiry. Vedanta is a radical teaching; it is counter-intuitive; *expect* it to challenge everything you thought you knew. Without faith in the scripture (*shraddha*), self inquiry will not work.

This is not blind faith like religions demand, but faith *pending* the results of your own inquiry.

**2. Manana:** Reasoning, contemplation. This is thinking about what the scripture is saying, examining the *unexamined* logic of your own experience. At this point, you look at your beliefs and opinions *in the light* of what the scripture says, NOT the other way around.

**3. Qualifications:** One determines if all the qualifications necessary for *moksa* are present. If they are not, **one has to develop them**. Self knowledge will not stick in a mind that is not prepared and purified. There is no purifier like self knowledge (*jnana yoga*) but there are other practices one can do, like meditation for instance—or even sitting in silence. But, meditation (or any other practice) is an **aid** to self inquiry; it does not **equal** self inquiry nor does it take its place.

**4. Karma Yoga—negating the doer.** *Karma yoga*, when practiced properly, is really *dharma yoga* because every action you take is dedicated to *Isvara*; it is a consecration. It is understood that peace of mind only comes with the realisation that you are not in control of the dharmafield, yet in taking the appropriate steps to act according to *dharma* and then relinquishing the results, peace of mind is produced. If you are not experiencing peace of mind by relinquishing results you are not relinquishing results. It's that simple—the doer is still there, afraid and small, still wanting a particular result, frustrated and afraid because they believe they need the result to be safe or whole and they are not getting what they want.

***Karma yoga* is not to destroy the doer, or, in some cases, even its sense of doer-ship. *Karma yoga* is meant to clear the mind of enough likes and dislikes until it becomes composed enough to do sustained inquiry. Only inquiry removes the problem of doer-ship because it shows that you, the self, cannot be the ego (doer) that is known to you. When that is clear, the doer can appear in you, even with a trace of doer-ship, but you do not identify with it.**

**5. Triguna Vibhava Yoga:** Once the mind is clear and established in karma yoga, the next step is to examine and identify ones' conditioning in light of self knowledge, i.e. the *gunas*. This means you take an objective view of the programmes (*vasanas*) that modify the mind and make up the *jiva's* "stuff". If you do not have a good understanding of the *gunas*, what they are and how they function, I recommend that you go to the ShiningWorld website and use the search function on this vital topic. All the Shiningworld writers have written extensively about this.

**6. Establish a Prakriya:** Vedanta offers several practices that can be used very effectively to negate the doer and render the binding *vasanas* non-binding. The most effective is to practice the opposite thought. Whenever a toxic thought arises in the mind, or a thought that contradicts your nature as awareness, immediately employ the opposite thought. For instance, if you have someone in your life that you have very bad thoughts about, think loving thoughts. If the toxic or self-negating thoughts arise, think the opposite thought. You keep up this practice for every thought that arises in the mind that is contrary to your true nature as awareness.

**7. Nididhyasana:** Self Realisation, which is the full understanding of your true nature as awareness. This means you apply the knowledge to your life and take a stand in awareness as awareness. If the mind is still agitated by *rajas* and *tamas* because all the qualifications are not in place and binding *vasanas* still condition the mind, one has to go back and re-qualify. There is no other way to negate the doer and render the binding *vasanas* non-binding in order that Self-actualisation—the final “stage” can take place.

**8. Self Actualisation:** Once the knowledge is firm, one sees everything from the point of view of awareness **first**, second as the *jiva* and one never confuses the two again. This is discriminating the self, you (*sattya*), from the objects that appear in you (*mithya*) **at all times, regardless of how the person is feeling**. Self-actualisation is the consistent, total application of Self knowledge to one's life. To be Self actualized means (1) that one has fully discriminated the Self (consciousness) from the objects appearing in it (all objects, meaning all gross objects as well as one's conditioning, thoughts and feelings—all experience) and (2) that that knowledge has (a) rendered the binding *vasanas* non-binding and (b) negated one's sense of doership.

Unless self knowledge translates fully into the life of the person it cannot be said that Self actualisation has taken place because the person will still be identified with certain aspects of being a person. In other words binding *vasanas* and the sense of doership or egoic belief in separation will still be causing agitation in the mind. In order for existential suffering to end and for Awareness to be one's primary identity, the person needs to be free of the idea of being a person in order to live free as the Self. What is the point of self realisation if the mind is still under the tyranny of its likes and dislikes (*vasanas*)?

One can only fully actualize Self Knowledge when you have understood the identity between Awareness, *Isvara* and the *jiva*. This is where most people get stuck (or come un-stuck) in their self inquiry and it is why many Self Realised people do not Self Actualize. Understanding *Isvara* is the key. This is probably one of the most important teachings in Vedanta.

These steps are not necessarily linear; one can jump around a great deal until self knowledge has removed all ignorance and the knowledge is firm. Many inquirers go through a stage when the knowledge is on or off, what we call the fire-fly stage. They get disheartened and start to criticize or feel bad about themselves when the knowledge is not constant, or they “slip up”. Don't get discouraged by this as it is a pretty normal stage for everyone to go through. Lifetimes of ignorance will take what it takes to dissolve. And *prarabdha karma* (the momentum of past actions) will play out as long as it plays out. It is not up to the *jiva* but to *Isvara*. The price of freedom is eternal vigilance—so, day by day, brick by brick; allow self knowledge to do the work of removing every last vestige of ignorance.

Thank you so much Sundari

You are most welcome Pamela, write any time.

Much love from James and me

Sundari